

DATE: August 31, 2001

TO: Office of State Budget

FROM: P. Charles LaRosa Jr., Commissioner

SUBJECT: Annual Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 2000-2001

The South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department respectfully submits its Annual Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 2000-2001 as required by Sections 1-1-810 and 1-1-820 of the 1976 Code of Laws. Federal law and regulations, principally the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, specify the department's mission as well as program objectives.

The South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department continues to set national standards for productivity and cost efficiency. However, continuous improvement and a sharp customer focus are vital if we are to fulfill our mission of enabling eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment.

The department's strategic planning initiatives continue to evolve as we seek to "make the best better." These efforts and a self-analysis using the Baldrige Award Criteria led us to submit an entry in the 2001 South Carolina Governor's Quality Award competition. We were pleased to have been selected for a site visit by examiners for that award and look forward to the feedback that we will receive this fall.

The performance measures in this accountability report are all outcome-oriented and directly related to the department's mission. The agency contact for this report is Mark G. Wade, who can be reached at (803) 896-6834.

Enclosure

Accountability Report Transmittal Form

Agency Name: South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department

Date of Submission: August 31, 2001

Agency Director: P. Charles LaRosa Jr.

Agency Contact Person: Mark G. Wade

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I. Executive Summary

The mission of the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD) is to enable eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment.

Investing in South Carolinians with disabilities offers a high-yield return. The public vocational rehabilitation program converts people reliant on government assistance into self-sufficient citizens who have jobs, purchase goods and services, save for the future, and pay taxes that quickly reimburse the funds spent on their rehabilitation.

Through seven years of strategic plan development and deployment, SCVRD continues to improve a program that already was a national leader. The past year has brought further refinements to elevate our standards in productivity, quality customer service, and compliance.

The agency values:

- Persons with disabilities who strive to achieve and maintain competitive employment.
- Highly qualified staff members who are personally accountable, communicate effectively and work together in a professional manner.
- Partnerships with business and industry that provide employment and contract service opportunities for our clients.
- Relationships with other human service agencies that provide increased service opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Accountability to taxpayers through efficient and effective use of the resources entrusted to us.

Agency visions include:

- All staff will be committed to the agency's mission, values and vision.
- Technology will be used to provide maximum benefit to our staff and clients.
- We will be the leader in innovative, individualized customer service that contributes to successful employment outcomes.
- Our relationships with business, industry and all levels of government will be positive and productive.
- We will provide quality service in an atmosphere of trust, sincerity and commitment.
- We will provide advancement opportunities in order to develop and retain exceptional employees.
- We will demonstrate accountability through the efficient and effective use of the resources entrusted to us.
- We will provide our customers with the tools, services and products that will prepare them to compete successfully in the 21st Century workplace.

SCVRD's leadership continues to closely examine and evaluate all practices and procedures throughout the program to ensure that performance measures are appropriate, that goals are met or surpassed, that all actions show strict accountability, and that ***all measures point directly to one outcome—competitive employment for our clients***. The department does not accept credit for efforts on behalf of clients who do not become employed.

The department is unique in that it serves people with more than 135 different physically and mentally disabling conditions. In 2000-2001, the SCVRD Basic Service Program placed 9,099 people with disabilities into competitive employment. These new taxpayers pay back \$2.63 for every vocational rehabilitation dollar spent. On average, they fully repay the cost of rehabilitation in 5.3 years.

National comparisons show that the SCVRD successfully rehabilitates people with disabilities at a much higher rate than its counterparts in other states—nearly three times as many per capita. South Carolina's cost per rehabilitation is roughly half of the national average cost.

The department has always placed great emphasis on customer input, and this year it took a more formalized approach to documenting that input. Customer feedback served as an effective tool in analyzing agency performance. The department solicits this feedback through surveys, focus groups and other vehicles. Customer satisfaction remained high last year, and 99 percent of the successfully rehabilitated clients surveyed indicated they would recommend SCVRD services to others.

In keeping with a sharp focus on human resources, staff members were able to take advantage of increased opportunities for specialized training, enhancing their job effectiveness and client service. Upgrades in computer hardware and customized agency software enabled field staff to further refine the team concept of customer service while allowing the agency to track its performance more effectively.

The agency values its employees' dedication and accomplishments, and employees meeting and surpassing performance standards were rewarded with agency merit increases that supplemented state increases. The department's primary recognition tool, the "Celebration of Success" program, proved to be very popular among employees, who were recognized by their co-workers for their accomplishments and customer service efforts.

Meanwhile, the department's partnerships with other state and local human services providers attract many clients who may not have been referred to the program otherwise.

The SCVRD's local work training centers continued to build effective partnerships with hundreds of the state's businesses and industries, which provided outsource work for clients at the centers. These agreements enable clients to gain valuable work experience and an understanding of the personal, social and professional standards required to succeed in the workplace. Business and industry benefited through a cost-effective, reliable resource while the department realized more than \$15 million dollars in revenues through these partnerships. Clients were paid more than \$6 million in training wages for work performed in the training centers and remaining funds were used for raw materials, supplies and other operating costs.

Successfully rehabilitated clients lessen the burden on the nation's Social Security budget and the department benefits through Social Security reimbursement for case closures. This year the

Vocational Rehabilitation Department realized about \$1 million in reimbursements. These funds were channeled into service delivery to help keep costs down.

The Disability Determination Program continued to strengthen the department's range of services by providing effective and efficient evaluation of claims for disability benefits. With an annual workload of more than 91,000 disability claims, the program strives to process all claims with the highest possible level of quality, in the shortest possible time and at the lowest reasonable cost. During 2000-2001, the division's production rate exceeded regional and national averages. The Disability Determination Program also works cooperatively with other agencies, processing claims for Medicaid and the South Carolina State Retirement Systems.

Budget Impact

The current state funding cuts not only affect the number of people that the department will be able to serve and rehabilitate, but will also impact the department's ability to provide its customers with the caliber of services they need to successfully compete in the workplace. Non-funded mandated programs are on the rise, and federal vocational rehabilitation law contains a "maintenance of effort" provision that every dollar the state cuts will result in the additional loss of one dollar of federal funding.

An inability to continue providing top-level services will result in the loss of valuable opportunities for our state's citizens with disabilities, who currently realize a \$12.41 increase in earnings for every dollar of vocational rehabilitation funds spent on their rehabilitation. Consequently, the state's taxpayers will get a smaller return on their investment, because competitively employed SCVRD clients pay back \$2.63 in taxes for every dollar spent on their rehabilitation.

II. Business Overview

The public vocational rehabilitation program is the oldest and most successful federal/state human service program in the nation. Created by the Smith-Fess Act in 1920, its original purpose was to return a large number of veterans disabled in World War I to gainful employment. South Carolina's vocational rehabilitation program began in 1927 and for a considerable number of years has enjoyed top performance rankings nationally for providing effective service to clients.

To some observers, significant change might seem an unnecessary risk when an organization is operating from a position of strength. Yet in the mid-1990s, the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department's agency board and senior management team, with the help of the entire staff statewide, put into motion a new strategic plan that was designed to "make the best better." A thorough self-examination showed that the department could, and therefore *should*, elevate its program to greater achievement and, more importantly, provide a much sharper focus on customer service excellence.

Today, the SCVRD has a very new look as it strives to achieve its mission of enabling people with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment. The agency completely re-engineered its service delivery system by placing more emphasis on individualized, direct contact with our clients and less emphasis on "process," or paperwork. With the mission as the focus, the department continues to set national standards for productivity and cost efficiency.

The department is unique in that its primary customers are people with more than 135 different physically and mentally disabling conditions. In 2000-2001, the SCVRD placed 9,099 people with disabilities into competitive employment. The department served a total of 44,105 people. (Since rehabilitation is a continuous process that often takes a period of years, the department serves some of the same clients in successive years.)

With a highly trained staff of rehabilitation professionals working in customer-oriented teams, the department is geared to convert dependent tax consumers into independent, working taxpayers.

National comparisons show that the SCVRD successfully rehabilitates people with disabilities at a much higher rate than its counterparts in other states—nearly three times as many per capita. South Carolina also spends significantly less to achieve those employment outcomes.

Twenty-four percent of the department's successfully rehabilitated clients work in service positions. About 17 percent work in industry, 16 percent in clerical/sales, 15 percent in professional/managerial/technical jobs, 13 percent in construction, 2 percent in agriculture and the remaining 13 percent in fields classified as "miscellaneous."

At the end of fiscal year 2001, the department had 1,093 classified employees, 2 unclassified employees and 223 temporary employees.

SCVRD operates a network of 20 area offices (Aiken, Anderson, Beaufort, Berkeley-Dorchester, Camden, Charleston, Columbia, Conway, Florence, Greenville, Greenwood, Lancaster, Laurens, Marlboro, Oconee-Pickens, Orangeburg, Rock Hill, Spartanburg, Sumter and Walterboro). Each of these has a work training center component and there are additional work training centers in Hartsville and Gaffney. The department also has 15 satellite locations, six statewide facility and cooperative programs, a center for comprehensive rehabilitation programs and two substance

abuse treatment centers. The State Office in West Columbia furnishes central support. The staff provides direct services, administrative services and assistance in arranging or purchasing needed services for customers.

The department also operates the Disability Determination Division, which processes Social Security and Supplemental Security Income claims under provisions of the Social Security Act. It serves the state from a central office in West Columbia and regional offices in West Columbia, Greenville and Charleston.

The SCVRD's local work training centers continue to build effective partnerships with hundreds of the state's businesses and industries, which provide outsource work for clients at the centers. This gives clients valuable work experience and an understanding of the personal, social and professional standards required to succeed in the workplace.

Base Budget Expenditures and Appropriations

	99-00		00-01		01-02	
	Actual Expenditures		Actual Expenditures		Appropriations Act	
Major Budget Categories	Total Funds	General Funds	Total Funds	General Funds	Total Funds	General Funds
Personal Service	37,828,856	12,392,882	41,110,910	13,442,777	40,459,887	12,844,240
Other Operating	27,411,749	655,863	28,958,783	858,272	32,925,493	829,705
Special Items						
Permanent Improvements	675,721		1,167,077			
Case Services	16,793,010	503,019	18,109,744	663,421	19,650,000	525,000
Distributed to Subdivisions						
Fringe Benefits	9,487,512	3,158,461	10,641,188	3,529,216	10,846,160	3,640,592
Non-recurring						
Total	\$92,196,848	\$16,710,225	\$99,987,702	\$18,493,686	\$103,881,540*	\$17,839,537*

* 2001-2002 figures are amounts appropriated. The cut will come out of these figures.

Description of Services

Someone who has a physical or mental disability and is of working age may apply for vocational rehabilitation services by contacting the nearest SCVRD office. The applicant meets with a counselor to discuss what might be preventing the person from getting or keeping a job and to learn about VR services that might be available.

Eligibility

To be eligible for VR services, the applicant must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially interferes with his or her ability to work. The person must also require and be able to benefit from VR services that would lead to permanent, competitive employment.

When a person applies for services, a team of vocational rehabilitation specialists will help determine eligibility and then help him or her understand options in setting and reaching employment goals. The applicant's medical records will be used to help determine eligibility for services.

Planning rehabilitation

Once the counselor has established a client's eligibility, it is time to determine what services are needed to put the client on a path to permanent, competitive employment. The client works as a partner with the Career Planning and Employment team, the counselor and other staff.

It is important for a client to select an employment goal that best suits his or her abilities and interests. This can be done in several ways.

The client may benefit from a community work experience, which might involve "shadowing" a person who is performing the job; working on the job under the guidance of a mentor; or actually trying out the job.

In some cases, individualized testing may provide insight about strengths and abilities.

Once the client has chosen a vocational goal, it's time for a plan of action. This is called an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). When the client and counselor agree on the services needed and sign the IPE, it becomes the client's guide in preparing for employment.

Informed choice

The client is at the center of the choices made to reach goals. SCVRD staff works closely with the client to provide the information needed to fully participate in the decisions that will be made during the rehabilitation process.

Restoration services

The department may provide medical or other services to help meet physical or mental disability needs that require attention before the client can reach an employment goal. These services are based on individual need.

Classes

Instructional classes are offered to all clients as they prepare for employment. These include: disability-related classes that address specific disabilities and how they affect the client's ability to work; pre-employment classes (filling out job applications, developing interview skills, basic computer skills); and/or employment classes when the client is "job ready," including job-seeking groups, advanced interview skills and other topics.

Training

Any job requires specific knowledge and skills, but certain behaviors are desirable in all jobs.

Job-readiness training helps develop positive work behaviors and the physical stamina needed for successful adjustment to a new job. This training may include performing work outsourced to the SCVRD work training center by area businesses and industries. A client's individual plan may call for training or course work provided by SCVRD staff or through an outside program.

Other services

Based on individual needs, other services might include interpreter services; transportation; occupational licenses, tools, equipment, initial stocks and supplies; technical assistance and consultation about self-employment or the establishment of a small business.

Job placement

Every service a client receives is for one purpose—to prepare for employment. As the client approaches the end of the services on his or her plan, the counselor and other members of the client service team will focus on the job placement process. Their mission is not complete until the client is in a suitable job. Many clients can and do find their own jobs. Others may need someone to assist them. In either case, the staff strives to make the transition to competitive employment successful.

Supported Employment

It's possible that the client may need a little extra help getting started on a job. Some of our clients qualify for supported employment services, in which a staff member works side-by-side with them at the job site and trains them to perform the job duties. The employer pays only the client during this period. The job coach leaves once the client learns to do the job alone.

Follow Up

Service goes beyond job placement. SCVRD staff provide follow-up services to every client placed in competitive employment. The department does not close a case as successfully rehabilitated until the client and employer are satisfied.

Specialized services

The Vocational Rehabilitation team is uniquely equipped to provide a full range of services based on individual needs. Some specialized areas of service are cardiac rehabilitation; deaf and hard of hearing program; job retention services that employers offer employees whose jobs are threatened by disabling conditions; substance abuse/dependence rehabilitation; and statewide partnerships with other agencies.

Center for Comprehensive Programs

The Vocational Rehabilitation Department offers specialized, innovative services to clients with significant physical disabilities through its Center for Comprehensive Programs on its West Columbia campus. Clients from throughout the state are referred to the center if those services are needed to prepare them for the workforce. Comprehensive Programs include the Evaluation Center, Pain Management Program, Muscular Development Program, Computer Training Program, Rehabilitation Technology Program, and Barrier Free Model Home.

Disability Determination Division

The Disability Determination Division strengthens the services provided by SCVRD through effective and efficient evaluation of claims for total and permanent disability benefits. Provisions for program operations are outlined in state and federal law and in agreements with other state agencies. The division's mission is to process claims with the highest possible level of quality, in the shortest possible processing time and at the lowest reasonable cost.

The Disability Determination Division serves individuals seeking assistance under provisions of the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability programs, South Carolina Retirement System disability program, total and permanent disability provisions of the Medicaid program and disability provisions of the South Carolina Homestead Exemption Act.

As part of the disability evaluation process, applicants are evaluated to determine if they will benefit from vocational rehabilitation services and, if so, they are referred to the Basic Service Program.

Disability Determination Division case processing operations for federal claims are governed by Social Security regulations and, in the case of non-federal programs, by specific provisions of South Carolina statutes and regulations.

In carrying out its goals, the Disability Determination Division strives to process all claims with the highest possible level of quality (by careful adherence to all applicable laws, regulations and policies), in the shortest possible processing time (in keeping with sound documentation and evaluation), and at the lowest reasonable cost (consistent with evidentiary requirements and sound program administration).

III. Elements of Baldrige Award Criteria

1. Leadership

Organizational Leadership

The need for strong leadership in vocational rehabilitation has never been more vital. Businesses and industries in South Carolina and nationwide need qualified, well-prepared employees. People with disabilities are ready to move into those jobs. The mission of the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD) is to enable eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment

“Making the best better” has been the thrust of the SCVRD’s strategic planning over the past seven years. Continuous improvement is vital as the Strategic Plan continues to evolve. Leadership continues to examine and evaluate all practices and procedures throughout the program and to address internal and external changes affecting the agency. This is accomplished through constant attention to formal and informal feedback and to the most obvious indicator-- successful employment outcomes.

Agency Commissioner P. Charles LaRosa Jr. has been extremely involved in every phase of the Strategic Plan implementation, showing strong leadership and empowering staff throughout the state to help the SCVRD chart its course.

The commissioner and the department’s other senior managers, with guidance from the agency board, are highly involved in developing a program based on input from staff, clients, employers, referral sources, and other customers. Senior managers lead work groups charged with creating and refining strategic planning initiatives, focusing on the opinions, needs, abilities and talents of the agency’s internal and external customers. Management staff are charged with facilitating Key Result Area (KRA) committees, which have been a driving force in the development and deployment of the Strategic Plan.

The agency mission drives all decisions and actions. The program’s integrity is maintained by strict adherence to the department’s enabling legislation, the Rehabilitation Act.

Senior leadership played a key role in the creation of the department’s vision and values, which concentrate on the needs of our customers and the importance of having qualified staff members who are personally accountable to those customers.

The mission and values are communicated to internal and external customers daily. Mission and value statements are on display in all of the department’s lobbies and reception areas. Business cards, department stationery and all department publications feature the mission. The mission statement is on the computer start-up screen of each of the agency’s 1,100 computer workstations.

All staff development and training workshops begin with a statement describing how the topic of the training supports the mission. The need for an integrated program that values equal measures of compliance, quality customer service, and successful outcomes has led to the development of the Program Integrity model, which is incorporated into all training.

Senior management further emphasizes agency mission, vision and values through regional meetings, customer service training and awards, and new employee orientation. An internal

newsletter is devoted entirely to furthering employee understanding of the mission, vision and values and the ways in which the department seeks to carry them out.

Senior management is deeply involved in business planning on an ongoing basis to ensure alignment of systems and processes. Our agency's re-engineering of the entire local service delivery system is the ultimate example. When SCVRD launched its new strategic planning initiatives in 1994, management anticipated the forthcoming changes in federal vocational rehabilitation legislation and recognized the need for more emphasis on direct client contact and less emphasis on paperwork. The thickness of a case file and quantity of documentation was no longer seen as a measure of success. Quality customer service leading to appropriate competitive employment is at the center of business planning, and management has been at the forefront of this movement. The formation of career planning and employment teams (CPE) empowering clients with more choices in their plans for employment showed great foresight in light of ensuing rehabilitation legislation that mandated informed choice.

Managers do not rely entirely on others within the organization for feedback on customer needs and expectations. They also have direct means of contact. This extends to the top of the leadership structure with site visits by the agency commissioner, who talks with customers about their services and their expectations. Senior managers also access feedback through public hearings, written or verbal customer surveys, partnerships with other agencies and referral sources, and panel discussions in which customers have a forum to interact with staff. Specialized target audiences, such as the deaf community, register feedback through our agency's involvement with advocacy groups and disability associations.

Each of the department's 20 area supervisors has an essential or core duty to regularly make contact with employers and referral sources to maintain a high degree of customer satisfaction.

Public hearings allow management to consider the potential risks and effects of proposed policies before they are implemented. Senior managers work closely with the internal client relations specialist and, when necessary, the Client Assistance Program in the Office of the Governor to consider the merits of decisions and their impact on clients.

Senior managers use a systematic approach to evaluate future opportunities for the agency by monitoring trends, gathering input from state and local area staff and by ensuring that new strategies comply with the law. For example, further development of our department's community partnerships with participation in One-Stop centers created through the Workforce Investment Act has increased the agency's visibility among new audiences. Our leadership has been extremely active at the local and state levels on workforce investment boards.

Leadership developed a systematic approach to launch many of the changes brought about by the Strategic Plan, most notably the pilot programs that introduced the vocational rehabilitation team concept to area offices. Through development, evaluation and implementation of pilot programs, senior management helped participating staff get through many problematical and uncomfortable moments that naturally occur when an organization goes through drastic changes in the way it does business. The commissioner recognized the need to help employees deal with these difficulties and the need for his senior staff to help in the transition. As our staff took on new roles and responsibilities, he led the initiative to provide staff with role-definition training. This was an enormous effort and included workshops for counselors, office assistants, eligibility support, planned services support, procurement specialists, information specialists, CPE specialists and Statewide Facility staff.

A major transformation in agency operations was the conversion of all mainframe computer data and programs to a local server system. This was seen by senior management as the only way to serve our client base at maximum levels. Senior managers meet bi-weekly with the department's Information Systems staff to discuss user requests for computer program changes. The agency staff is encouraged to become involved in "process improvement" through suggestions for new programs that will better enable staff to serve clients more efficiently and effectively. At least five requests per week are reviewed and are often implemented within a short period of time.

The department succeeds in staying "ahead of the curve" by anticipating effects of current federal rehabilitation legislation. An example is the Ticket to Work program, for which the department made advance preparations through staff reassignments. This will enable us to clearly define the options clients have in the program.

The agency board and management's commitment to quality improvement reached a new level in 1999 with the opening of the LaRosa Human Resource Development Center on the department's main campus in West Columbia. This state-of-the-art facility allows employees from across the state to come together, in person or by videoconference, for training, education, and meetings. The center also provides hands-on computer training to agency staff.

Management's commitment to quality employment outcomes was also illustrated in the department's success in generating reimbursements from the Social Security Administration. Successfully rehabilitated clients lessen the burden on the nation's Social Security budget and the department benefits through reimbursements for successful closures. This year the department realized about \$1 million in reimbursements, which were channeled into service delivery to help keep costs down.

Under the guidance of the commissioner, the director of the Disability Determination Division and other division management staff participate in developing and implementing national, regional and state goals for the Disability Program. The division director plays a key role in developing and disseminating regional and national action plans to ensure quality assessment and improvement and serves on a national steering committee on policies and procedures related to the use of technology in the national disability program. The division systems manager serves as a national chairperson for technology infrastructure and as one of three members of a national consortium providing guidance to the Social Security Administration on the effects of systems changes on program operation.

The South Carolina Disability Determination Division leadership has piloted crucial program changes that will be implemented nationally over the next five years. They include areas such as claim development; evaluation and adjudication policy; roles and responsibilities of disability examiners; and pre-decision conferences with claimants to ensure decision accuracy.

Public Responsibility and Citizenship

The department's mission demands that the challenge of public responsibility is taken quite seriously. Indeed, as the designated agency to enable people with disabilities to become employed, public responsibility is essential. South Carolina's workforce benefits as it employs the talents of people with disabilities and the state's residents reap dividends when people with disabilities become taxpayers instead of tax consumers. Most importantly, we exercise our public responsibility by enabling our clients to enhance their quality of life through the fulfillment and rewards of employment.

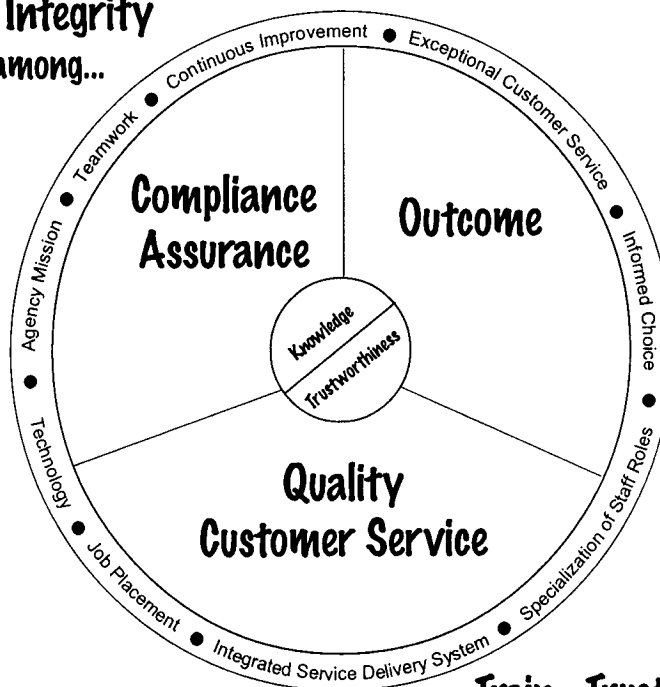
The department's impact on society can be measured through the success of the 9,000 people with disabilities who go to work each year after receiving SCVRD services.

Program Integrity is the service model developed by senior management. In all staff education and development efforts, leadership points to the Program Integrity model to keep a focus on compliance with enabling legislation, quality customer service and desired employment outcomes.

Empowerment of employees to reach these goals was implemented through the philosophy "train, trust and verify."

The Integrated Service Delivery System is a key component of the Program Integrity model and a direct response to customer needs. Specific core duties were developed to capitalize on the education, training and special skills of the staff so they can provide seamless service delivery.

Program Integrity a balance among...



Train • Trust • Verify

The department has built in numerous other mechanisms for ensuring ethical business practices. Vocational rehabilitation law contains very strict compliance measures that are monitored closely at different levels within the organization and through outside audits. The department's administrative and case service policies outline agency standards for conduct and adherence to the law.

Though not required by law, SCVRD has for many years employed a full-time client relations specialist who is available for clients to contact when they are not satisfied with the way their service programs have been carried out. This specialist monitors the actions of staff to ensure that the clients have been treated fairly and in accordance with their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The specialist and other senior managers also maintain a good working relationship with the Client Assistance Program in the Office of the Governor. Face-to-face meetings with clients and CAP personnel help resolve complaints and provide appropriate corrections.

The SCVRD also employs a full-time staff attorney for guidance in compliance issues and legal interpretations.

Safety for clients and staff has always been important, but has received special attention since the commissioner created the Risk Management department in 1998. This department promotes a mindset, that “safety is not just a list of rules and regulations.” The goal is to promote safety awareness to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses, provide a hazard free work environment and lower Workers’ Compensation premiums. By nature our 22 work training facilities include industrial-type settings for both staff and clients (more than 8,000 clients train in our centers each year), so high standards for safety are imperative. The Risk Management department now processes all Workers’ Compensation cases for staff and clients. The department shows a steady decrease in the number of claims by carefully monitoring return to work issues and getting people back to work faster.

The agency’s leadership firmly supports citizenship activities nationally, statewide, and locally. Members of the senior leadership team are involved in civic organizations, disability advocacy organizations, task forces on disability and other community groups that can benefit from their expertise.

The commissioner has set an example by becoming a national figure in promotion of the public vocational rehabilitation program as past president of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation. He has had major input toward the development of national policy and in Congressional discussions on the future of the program.

Such involvement goes well beyond the State Office. An example is an area supervisor who holds a national leadership position in the Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

The agency is quite active in community assistance projects such as The United Way, Red Cross blood drives, The Good Health Appeal, adopted family efforts during the holidays, Americans with Disabilities Act celebrations, and wheelchair sports events.

The department coordinates all activities of the Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, which reaches out to the business community and the public on the advantages of hiring people with disabilities. The Governor’s Committee spawns local mayor’s committees, which are spread throughout the state.

Community involvement is essential for SCVRD area supervisors and their staff. These contacts allow staff to spread the word about programs and encourage partnerships with businesses. Through involvement in local chamber of commerce activities, Rotary groups and other community organizations, SCVRD staff members consistently form bonds within their communities that lead to employment for clients and outsourcing agreements with companies for work training centers

High visibility in the business and civic communities has resulted in recruitment of major company representatives to serve on local SCVRD business advisory boards. These relationships only further the employment of people with disabilities.

2. Strategic Planning

The department continues to build from its major strategic planning initiative that began seven years ago. All of the key result areas of the plan—values, mission, vision; customer service; technology; government relations; partnerships; public information and education; human resource development and management; and continuous improvement—have become integrated into the department’s daily operation. These areas have all been incorporated into staff development and training, into internal and external communications, through supervisory meetings and directly into job descriptions and performance appraisals.

Each of the original key result areas featured long- and short-range goals, with time frames established for implementation of each phase of the plan. The department has been successful in meeting these goals, and new goals have been established for continuous improvement to build upon those original seven areas. As its name implies, the continuous improvement initiative is an ongoing strategic planning mechanism. Committees representing a wide range of perspectives are assembled to address specific needs and changes sparked by the strategic plan.

Internal and external feedback help the department develop and deploy strategic planning initiatives. This is sometimes carried out through a statewide committee, where a pilot program may be developed; or at the local level as part of the management plan that each area office is required to develop and use.

Strategic planning in the continuous improvement categories has focused on the areas of:

- local practices;
- quality enhancement;
- teams;
- rehabilitation training/evaluation centers; and
- system integration and process.

Federal and state laws mandate that the SCVRD convert as many eligible people with disabilities from unemployed tax consumers to tax-paying, competitively employed workers as the agency’s resources will allow. Strategic planning incorporates the department’s Program Integrity model, which mandates a balance among compliance assurance, quality customer service and employment outcomes.

Those factors weighed heavily this year in the refinement of “informed choice.” This is an ongoing process in which the applicant/client, the counselor and other SCVRD staff members gather and review information the client can use to make choices about goals and services needed to achieve a successful employment outcome. The individual is a full and active partner in the rehabilitation process and is involved in all decisions. Strategic planning in this area involved development of guidelines, forms, staff education and training, and implementation measures to help staff comply with federal requirements, provide quality customer service, and produce successful employment outcomes.

The agency's three regional supervisors, part of the senior management team, oversee the development of business management plans in each of the 20 area offices. The management plans address:

- Customer service
- Compliance
- Operational procedure
- Public information and education
- Staff rewards and recognition
- Job placement

These plans incorporate components of the Program Integrity model and contain detailed plans and policies developed at the local level, consistent with agency policy and guidelines. These plans are monitored for compliance and achievement of the targeted goals. In turn, they are used as tools for training and the setting of new goals at the beginning of each year.

The management team helps establish local office goals for successful rehabilitations by taking into account staffing, client bases, referral sources, local demographics and economic conditions, previous accomplishments and other factors. These local goals add up to a statewide goal for successful rehabilitations, a total that the department's enabling legislation requires to be at least one rehabilitation more than the previous year.

Senior managers review performance measures regularly through detailed reports that show each area office or facility's success rate in obtaining new referrals, identifying eligible clients and the resulting outcomes. Information derived from these reports is used to make decisions regarding cost effectiveness on a cost-per-case basis.

The department continued to upgrade its technological capabilities as a key component of strategic plan deployment. Twenty additional caseloads have been added during the department's streamlining efforts. This is in part a reflection of technology improvements that reduced paperwork and shifted the focus to the customer. The Information Systems manager visited each of the agency's area, satellite and statewide facility offices last year to update staff about new technology, gather input, and discuss needs and plans for the future. A key long-range goal was reached this year with the phasing out of a mainframe-based system and full implementation of Windows NT servers, improving speed and flexibility for data collection, case management and training center activities.

During the latter stages of 2000-2001 the department conducted a self-assessment survey, using the self-assessment guidelines provided by the Budget and Control Board's Office of Human Resources. Employees had the opportunity to evaluate the department's effectiveness by answering 70 questions relating to the seven categories of the Baldrige Criteria. Hundreds of SCVRD staff members were involved in this effort; some participated individually and others in groups. The results of the very candid self-assessment helped document strengths and weaknesses in the program and provided input for future strategic planning efforts.

Disability Determination Division long-range and short-range plans are developed or refined at the beginning of each fiscal year and the objectives for the year are issued to all personnel as goals. Program goals are linked to objectives contained in Employment Performance Management System (EPMS) planning documents.

3. Customer Focus

Customer and Market Knowledge

The department's Strategic Plan begins and ends with the customer. As a result, every policy, procedure, service, and organizational structure has come under review during the last seven years. Revolutionary changes have occurred to better meet the needs of all customers, both external and internal.

The department's formally identified customers include:

- people with disabilities who strive to achieve and maintain competitive employment;
- the businesses and industries that provide employment and training opportunities for the department's clients;
- other human service agencies whose partnerships enhance employment outcomes for clients;
- the taxpayers who depend on the department to efficiently and effectively use the resources entrusted to it;
- staff members, whose teamwork, attitudes and embracement of Program Integrity are vital to the department's success; and
- referral sources, which enable SCVRD to expand its service base.

Customers access information about our department and services in many ways. They include personal contacts, brochures, videos, referrals from a myriad of community organizations, and referrals from friends and family. The past year has brought an increase in exposure through the department's web site, where people often originate their relationship with the agency.

Referrals

People with disabilities are SCVRD's clients and primary customers, and the department's success can occur only with an excellent client referral network.

The self-referral is the largest single source, accounting for about 19 percent of the cases served by the department. However, referrals come from about 40 other sources as well, especially from:

- High schools, colleges and universities
- Correctional facilities and programs
- Physicians and hospitals
- Cardiac rehabilitation programs
- Mental health facilities
- Employers
- Social services programs
- Social Security
- Alcohol and drug treatment organizations
- Private disability organizations and other agencies
- Welfare agencies, public and private
- Employment services
- Private rehabilitation facilities
- Churches

- Workers' Compensation agency
- State employment service
- Vendors of artificial appliances and prosthetic devices.

Outreach

SCVRD has long recognized that it can expand its service base by “going where the needs are” rather than relying solely on provision of services within its own walls. All staff are encouraged, and in some cases required to regularly market the program to external audiences. Employers and other business partner contacts are essential in hiring and training of clients and they are a primary target audience for local SCVRD staff through personal visits and other associations. Appearances at community meetings, job fairs, health fairs, open houses and similar events are routine among staff statewide as part of local public relations and education plans.

Counselors throughout the state make presentations to business managers and executives to market the Job Retention Services program, a free and confidential service for people whose jobs are jeopardized by disabling conditions. Another example is outreach to the medical community's cardiac rehabilitation programs, where SCVRD provides vocational rehabilitation services to cardiac patients who want to return to work.

Strong partnerships with other agencies and statewide facilities have brought greater insight into customer needs and have resulted in a significant number of successful rehabilitations.

Statewide Facilities cooperative agreements exist with the Department of Mental Health, the Medical University of South Carolina, The Department of Juvenile Justice, Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School, the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services, and the Department of Corrections.

Approximately 270 interagency agreements form bonds with other key markets, including all Department of Social Services offices, public school districts, workforce investment boards, and many local alcohol and drug commissions.

The department also benefits from local work training center advisory boards at many of its area offices. These boards provide ideas, feedback and advice on meeting the needs of their specific communities. Work training centers and their corresponding area offices hold open house events to educate the local business community about SCVRD and to solicit input on bettering the operation through new partnerships.

Other external customers, such as employers, work training center partner companies, legislators, and other agencies provide feedback through personal contacts and meetings.

Marketing tools

A comprehensive collection of marketing materials complements staff contact with all the target audiences. More than 20 different printed publications are used to educate and elicit response via partnerships or feedback. While these publications are sometimes used as stand-alone marketing tools, staff is encouraged to use them in combination with personal appearances that will offer the opportunity for customers to ask questions or comment on our programs.

Marketing materials are developed based on customer needs. The new Career Planning and Employment (CPE) concept called for a specific set of marketing materials to educate employers about the program. In February 2001 a new folder with inserts on Job Retention Services, CPE

services, outsource opportunities and local contact information brought the marketing plan into focus.

The department produces its own videos to market the program and to assist in training. Feedback from internal and external customers pointed out a dire need for better video resources. The addition of a full-time position in August 2000 has resulted in an improved selection of marketing videos and the placement of two well-received television public service announcements distributed to stations throughout South Carolina.

Customer Satisfaction and Relationships

At every major stage in the rehabilitation process, the client is involved in the planning process and signs off on his or her Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Staff promotes client choice in the selection of vocational objectives, services and service providers. Clients are encouraged to provide feedback formally and informally.

The SCVRD formally collects customer satisfaction information in several other ways. Every VR area office has a customer service plan and during the rehabilitation process, clients can provide feedback. This is accomplished through focus groups, surveys and suggestion boxes. Client handbooks provide easy-to-read documentation of their means of filing both informal and formal complaints as well as an explanation of the rehabilitation process.

Lack of staff involvement in the direct job placement process was viewed by clients as an agency weakness, according to surveys and feedback to counselors. The remedy was to redesign support roles to take the paperwork burden off professional staff members, who could then spend more time in the community developing relationships with employers to create job opportunities. Clients also complained that counselors had too little time for them. Drastic improvements in computer programs addressed this concern by removing the “paperwork barrier” between the client and counselor.

Satisfying the client’s need for a more individualized approach to job preparation led to the development of the Career Planning and Employment (CPE) unit. Methods for determining vocational direction, which in the past relied heavily on paper-and-pencil testing, gave way to community-based evaluations. This method allows the client to try out a job in an actual work setting, observing firsthand the demands and rewards of the job. They may choose their vocational goal by observing or “shadowing” a person in the community who actually performs that job; work under a mentor to learn the job; or actually try the job. The CPE unit provides a full curriculum of disability-related classes, pre-employment, and employment classes ranging from resumé writing to basic computer skills. Job readiness training is available for those clients who may have never worked and need to learn successful work behaviors. Job readiness training is also important to clients who are recovering from injuries and illnesses and need to develop work stamina. If a client is significantly disabled and working in competitive employment is seriously in question, the CPE unit will provide trial work experiences in the most integrated setting possible—the local community.

The department systematically follows up on client complaints beginning with the basic client-staff relationship at the local service level. Most concerns can be resolved there. However, when local efforts to solve a problem do not satisfy the client, our full-time client relations specialist addresses the issue. The client also has the option, at any time, to take a complaint or concern to an impartial third party—the Client Assistance Program (CAP) in the Office of the Governor.

Disputes over the provision of vocational rehabilitation services are solved in an orderly and rational way through this program. Every person who formally applies for vocational rehabilitation services is given the toll-free contact information for these offices. CAP also provides the agency with a yearly report showing general areas of concern in client relations.

On the statewide level, the department conducts follow-up studies based on surveys of a random sample of successfully rehabilitated clients. This survey monitors satisfaction levels and rates of job retention. The department's program evaluation staff regularly conducts area reviews that include clients who were not successfully rehabilitated to learn why they have not reached an employment outcome and to determine if dissatisfaction played a part. Customer satisfaction trends are charted and reported to staff, the agency board and the public. The agency's client relations specialist tracks satisfaction trends over time and a new computer program will facilitate this documentation.

The agency responds to differing client needs by conducting staff training on specific disabilities or topics. This training often includes frank discussions by client panels. Spinal cord injury and traumatic brain injury are two recent examples of severe disability topics.

It is SCVRD policy that the client makes the ultimate determination of quality service. The client must be satisfied with services, service providers and vocational rehabilitation outcome before the department claims a successful rehabilitation, even if the client is competitively employed. This policy is not part of federal rehabilitation law and makes our agency unique among national vocational rehabilitation programs as well as other government entities.

Client feedback about SCVRD vendors and other external service providers was a need that received attention this year. A new vendor/service provider customer service survey was developed and will be implemented in 2001-2002.

In the Disability Determination Division, division managers each year develop outreach objectives and plans based on identified and/or projected needs. The leadership designs a schedule for attending conferences and meetings and for individual visits with professionals, advocacy groups or claimants to disseminate information about the program and respond to requests for information. Division personnel make from 20 to 30 presentations each year to various groups. In addition, from 8,000 to 10,000 inquiries from public officials, legal representatives or claimants are received and responded to each year.

4. Information and Analysis

Measurement of Organizational Performance

The department uses many performance measures, all tied into the accomplishment of the most important performance measure of all—its mission to enable eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment.

All of the agency's guiding visions have measurable factors that are tracked:

Vision 1: Commitment to the agency's mission

When we formulated our mission statement, we tried to avoid the pitfall of it becoming long and complicated. Ours boiled down to the very basics—to have a positive employment outcome for people with disabilities.

The thrust of the Strategic Plan has been to accomplish that mission for the greatest number of people with disabilities possible in a high quality, cost effective manner. As Category 7 (Business Results) will show, our plan is paying off in numbers of people rehabilitated and cost efficiency.

Vision 2: Using technology to provide maximum benefit to staff and clients

Department staff throughout the state has gained much easier access to information necessary to support daily operations thanks to substantial upgrades in technology. New programs allow staff to streamline the service delivery process in accordance with federal vocational rehabilitation law. The new technology not only saves time but offers much more in the way of data accumulation, breakdown and analysis. A key performance measure of technology is the ability to use the data to ensure compliance with Program Integrity. Caseload reviews; topical reviews that focused on a particular aspect of how we do business; financial reviews that serve as a watchdog function on behalf of the taxpayers; and other compliance analysis all benefit from the improved technology.

Vision 3: Being a leader in innovative customer service that contributes to successful employment outcomes

Quality customer service was recognized by the agency as crucial in carrying out new initiatives. Putting the focus on the client as the driving force in the rehabilitation process meant new approaches to developing and carrying out individual rehabilitation plans. Other external and internal customers, who provide direct links to employment outcomes for our clients, also needed to be served as professionally and effectively as possible.

Measurements to gauge performance here include customer satisfaction feedback, the involvement of vocational rehabilitation staff in a customer-oriented team approach, and the use of feedback to drive decisions on improvements in the VR program.

Vision 4: Maintaining positive and productive relationships with business, industry and all levels of government

This is a performance area that cannot be underestimated because no matter how well the department prepares its clients for employment, poor relationships with business and industry would severely limit our success.

Performance measures in this category hinge on the number of clients placed into competitive employment, the satisfaction of employers with the results of those placements, the degree to which local SCVRD staff communicate with employers, and the amount of involvement of business and industry in the work training and outsourcing segments of our local operations.

Positive relationships with government come from establishing cooperative programs with other agencies and obtaining successful employment outcomes for clients through those partnerships. Other government entities expect SCVRD to use its resources to produce a high return on the taxpayer investment.

Vision 5: Providing quality service in an atmosphere of trust, sincerity and commitment

These are virtues that we strive for through adherence to Program Integrity performance measures, through excellence in customer service, and through measurable efforts to improve safety conditions in our facilities.

Vision 6: Providing advancement opportunities to develop and retain exceptional employees.

The department has recognized the need to improve the enticements for outstanding staff members to remain with us. Human resource initiatives are focusing on career ladders that offer clear routes to advancement through excellence in job performance, which is measured systematically. Merit increases tied into performance is a measurable factor. Improved reward and recognition methods also provide an incentive to produce quality work.

Vision 7: Showing accountability by using resources efficiently and effectively

As a public agency, it is imperative that clearly defined performance measures track efforts. Serving and rehabilitating the highest possible number of people with disabilities and efficiently providing the high quality services needed to achieve a customer-pleasing employment outcome are measuring sticks. This is an area where comparative data on a national level is very telling. The department's ranking among other states in the nation, on a per capita basis, reveals the level of success here.

Another performance measure is the rate of return on the taxpayer dollar. Key indicators are the length of time it takes for a rehabilitated client to repay the cost of his or her rehabilitation after becoming a taxpayer, the amount that the rehabilitated client repays for every dollar spent on his or her rehabilitation, and degree to which their earnings increase after rehabilitation.

Vision 8: Providing our customers with the tools, services and products to prepare them to compete successfully in the 21st Century workplace

The re-engineering of the entire client service delivery process was designed to realize this vision. Old ways would not suffice. The department focused closely on equipping clients with what they needed to succeed in the modern workplace. The performance measure of direct job placement showed totals lower than desired and this concern was echoed by clients. The department launched new training initiatives to help staff generate imaginative and resourceful ways of finding appropriate employment for clients. This concept of "Cultivating True Livelihood" carried over into the later development of the Integrated Service Delivery model and its Career Planning and Employment program of services, which have measurable success factors.

Analysis of Organizational Performance

How well SCVRD clients achieve successful employment outcomes is the primary performance measure for each of the agency's areas of operation.

Analysis of key performance measures was enhanced by the department's recent transition from a mainframe computer system to a network-server computer operation for customized case management programs. To make this transition easier, information specialists throughout the state used L.O.I.S. (Local Office Information System), a specially designed database to enable them to meet the local office standards in customer service until a more "permanent" information system is in place.

Information gathered in analyzing performance also is useful in spotlighting strengths and weaknesses and can be used to update the Strategic Plan. The department conducts area caseload reviews to ensure that SCVRD teams carry out their duties in compliance with federal and agency regulations and standards. Proper documentation of each stage of a client's services is expected to detail appropriate services to meet the client's vocational needs; appropriate spending for services, including documentation that external funding alternatives are being sought; provision of informed choices for the client; and efforts to secure suitable employment for the client and satisfaction for the employer.

The department uses program reports to spot trends, project future needs and address federal key indicators. For example, the data can be used to anticipate staffing needs by analyzing the population. The agency generally has one counselor for each 20,000 people in the general population. When populations and demand for services shift, the agency must be ready to respond in keeping with its mission.

Client satisfaction surveys are carefully evaluated and used in the consideration of improvements or new services. How long clients retain their jobs after their cases are closed is monitored along with the degree to which rehabilitated clients increase their earnings over time. These kinds of indicators reflect the success of Career Planning and Employment services.

In 2000-2001, the department expanded its use of the Baldrige Criteria to document performance measures, outcomes and trends. Discussions and collection and analysis of self-assessment surveys resulted in the compilation of a formal "quality report," which was circulated to supervisors throughout the agency and made available to all staff. Local training in the Baldrige concepts was provided to employees to familiarize them with the measures, to illustrate how they fit into the accomplishment of the agency mission, and to request input.

The Disability Determination Division maintains an extensive array of daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual reports through comprehensive division, agency and Social Security computer reporting systems. Data on virtually every aspect of case processing, fiscal activity, quality assurance, and staffing are issued to the appropriate components. Statistical reports are aimed at providing performance tracking information related to established goals and objectives. Data allow comparisons at the individual, unit, office, state, and national levels in areas such as productivity, processing time, documentation and decision quality, cost effectiveness, staff turnover, and age of claims.

5. Human Resource Focus

Work Systems

The department's human resource initiatives are driven by the Strategic Plan, which drastically altered job responsibilities to better meet the needs of our customers. The development of high performance teams called for each team role to be clearly defined. Human Resources initiatives support the agency's mission by recruiting and retaining employees with appropriate skills and competencies. This begins with the identification of necessary competencies for each department position and the initial screening of applicants to determine the employee-job match. The department uses a five-factor personality inventory tool (NEO PI-R) to assess the characteristics and traits common to successful performers in the various team roles.

Staffing patterns are monitored to ensure that human resources are allocated appropriately to achieve the agency's mission. This monitoring is a joint effort between the Assistant Commissioner for Client Services, the Assistant Commissioner for Administration and the Human Resources Director. While these staffing patterns are fairly standard throughout SCVRD, pilot projects can be and are proposed on a regular basis to seek innovative methods for service delivery. For example, pilot projects in the Sumter and Columbia area offices resulted in the staffing pattern now used agencywide.

Such improvement efforts continue as SCVRD constantly seeks ways to streamline its processes and make them more efficient and effective in serving clients. As the agency moved to this new staffing pattern, changes have been managed through the use of retraining and reassignment with due consideration for the needs of the affected employee(s). These changes were the result of several years of hard work and preparation during which staff were fully informed of the changes and had input into the design. Training clarified new responsibilities. Due to the reengineering efforts, SCVRD now serves more clients, spends fewer case services dollars and achieves more successful employment outcomes than in previous years. In addition, under the new staffing pattern overall payroll has remained stable with an average annual increase of 3.7 percent since 1998. Most of these increases were the result of the state's general salary increases during the past three years.

Employee Education, Training and Development

SCVRD conducts assessments, training and development of staff on an ongoing basis in order to meet the current and future challenges of each of the team roles. In November 1999, the department opened the P. Charles LaRosa Jr. Human Resources Development facility on its main campus in West Columbia. This facility represents a huge investment in staff development to strengthen the agency's mission through training and development in five categories: orientation, leadership, safety, performance improvement, and technical skills.

Needs are identified through regulations, public hearings, program reviews, customer service surveys, Employee Performance Management System (EPMS) documents, training requests, and meetings with staff.

Impact on job performance is measured through training evaluations, Impact on Performance surveys, program reviews, customer service surveys, and EPMS documents.

New employees attend a three-day orientation session that covers a full range of information that is helpful in learning about the department's programs, benefits, and procedures.

The department recently placed greater emphasis on new supervisor training. All new supervisors receive extensive guidance with one or more of the following, depending on the supervisor's position: the department's new supervisor training which takes place over a three-day period and includes site visits to key offices and programs of the department; the Budget and Control Board's Division of Training; and/or the New Supervisors Institute at Georgia State University.

New supervisors also get thorough training to learn more about specific areas such as counseling, job placement, customer service, and medical/psychological aspects of disabilities. Each of these is a three-day session.

The department has begun using videoconferencing as a training tool. With a home base at the Human Resource Development Center in West Columbia, the department can connect four remote sites simultaneously. The remote sites (State Office in West Columbia, Spartanburg, Florence and Moncks Corner) are strategically located so that staff from different regions of the state can travel to a videoconference site in a short time. This cost-saving measure reduces travel reimbursements and overnight lodging expenses.

A development plan is established for each employee with an emphasis on the training provided to staff involved in direct service delivery to clients. Approximately \$320,000 is invested in training SCVRD staff on an annual basis.

The department is providing financial assistance to counselors who need additional education to meet new national standards for rehabilitation counseling qualifications.

A new initiative of the Strategic Plan is the development of a succession plan. SCVRD is establishing a program that will forecast future leadership needs, identify staff with appropriate abilities to meet those needs, and prepare those individuals to meet the challenges facing the department. The project is in the early stages, but analysis of the agency's work force indicates that the next two to five years will see dramatic changes in management personnel due to anticipated retirements. Succession planning will allow us to proactively prepare for those changes.

Employee Well-Being and Satisfaction

State regulations and policies govern the compensation and benefits provided to department employees. While benefits are standardized across state agencies, the department does exercise flexibility allowed by the regulations to provide pay increases. In addition to salary increases for promotions, compensation can be increased to reward good performance as well as to recognize the assumption of additional responsibilities. Pay mechanisms exist which allow the department to compensate employees for gaining additional knowledge, skills and competencies as well as a provision for retention increases. Such salary increases are tied directly to the accomplishment of the department's mission and are approved only after the employee satisfies the department's published criteria for the attainment of each increase. In addition, the one-time lump sum bonus provision has been used to reward employees when appropriate.

Career ladders have been established for most of our major job categories to guide employees in their development. The agency has developed matrices for most of the major career groups to

help employees understand how promotions may occur and to provide supervisors with a guide to employee development. One challenge for the future is the enhancement of the career tracks to provide additional mechanisms for an employee to expand and grow in his or her career without having to move into management if the employee is unsuited for that role.

SCVRD's commitment to excellent employee/employer relations is part of the human resources initiatives. This includes creating an environment where employees understand how their positions support the agency mission and feel valued for the efforts they put forth. All employees are instructed in appropriate behavior and performance expectations when they are first hired. New employee orientation includes overviews of the programmatic and administrative issues of which employees will need to be aware. The agency clearly details its expectations and seeks input and questions from the employees. Each new employee receives a collection of SCVRD administrative policies, which cover issues ranging from the use of leave, safety and risk management, compensation, client relations, progressive discipline and performance management. Administrative and other policies were recently placed on the computer network server so all employees will have easier access to the policies and procedures.

One critical initiative, which directly affects SCVRD's performance results, is its use of the Employee Performance Management System (EPMS). A copy of the EPMS policy is contained in the collection of policies noted above. Employees get a clear understanding of how their individual performance affects the agency's overall performance as goals are broken down first by area office and then by individual team member and detailed on the planning stage document. Also, employees gain an understanding of what is expected of them through ongoing communication and performance feedback required by the EPMS. The EPMS also ensures accountability through the use of qualitative and quantitative success criteria. In addition, the agency has linked pay directly to the EPMS in order to reward employees who meet and exceed the performance requirements of their jobs.

One innovative initiative is the "Celebration of Success" program. This reward and recognition system was instituted to allow employees to recognize their peers for significant accomplishments. The program fosters a work environment that rewards employees for providing excellent customer service and for contributions to productivity and program excellence. Any employee who receives three awards may choose a prize from a catalog featuring a variety of prizes emblazoned with the agency logo.

All these initiatives are part of SCVRD's human resources plan. One measure to determine how effective initiatives have been in creating a positive and productive work environment is the employee turnover rate. A comparison of the aggregate turnover for 1998 to 1999 and 2000 calendar year statistics indicates decreases of 20 percent and 9 percent respectively. While further study will be done to determine the exact reasons for these decreases, it is expected that our human resources initiatives will be partly responsible for the reduction.

Troubled employees whose jobs are jeopardized by disabling conditions have access to one of the agency's own service programs, Job Retention Services (JRS). Just as counselors offer this confidential service to companies throughout the state, employees also utilize it to overcome their difficulties while staying on the job.

The Risk Management department is charged with reviewing SCVRD office locations, ensuring compliance with OSHA requirements and providing a safe and healthy work environment.

Smoking is permitted in assigned areas only and generally not inside agency facilities. Emergency preparedness and other safety measures have been greatly bolstered.

Legal and regulatory compliance is another initiative that is monitored closely.

The Human Resources Office actively solicits feedback on its programs through the use of surveys and focus groups to determine program efficiency and effectiveness. However, there is still work to be done in the gathering of employee satisfaction data.

In the Disability Determination Division, all EPMS performance plans are developed in accordance with program goals and objectives. Reporting systems are designed to provide accurate and timely feedback on all key indices and a comprehensive monthly “Performance Index” is published to ensure that staff members are aware of how their performance in critical areas compares to that of their peers. Through a comprehensive training program emphasizing three levels—Basic, Ongoing and Job Enrichment—efforts are made to ensure relevant, timely and meaningful training. Basic training programs are designed to coincide with established job descriptions and a syllabus containing checkpoints is utilized to ensure that employees are prepared for their assigned tasks. Reward programs such as the agency’s Celebration of Success and the division’s PRIDE (People Responsibly Influencing Decisional Excellence) recognize superior performance in every job category at every level. In addition, awards for creative achievement, humanitarian service and special acts of service encourage well-rounded citizens as well as superior employees.

6.0 Process Management

Product and Service Processes

Every work process of the department can be defined and measured through the Program Integrity model. The Integrated Service Delivery System defines the members of the client service team and is designed to provide clients with a seamless program of quality services that comply with the law and lead to the desired employment outcome.

At each stop along the road in service delivery there are checks and balances to ensure compliance with the law and the client's informed choice. In the Integrated Service Delivery System, an applicant for services has direct interaction with a counselor. Eligibility support personnel secure existing records, such as medical or psychological information, to help determine if the applicant is eligible for services. Using existing records whenever possible instead of ordering new examinations, tests, etc., has helped accelerate the eligibility process and reduce costs. The Career Planning and Employment (CPE) psychologist provides assessment and diagnosis to assist in eligibility determination.

Sometimes a trial work experience is the best way to determine whether a person is employable and in some cases that applicant may be placed in extended evaluation.

Once the counselor and other members of the service delivery team make an eligibility determination, the applicant is either:

- accepted for services with a certificate of eligibility or
- denied services based on mandated eligibility standards that a person must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially interferes with his or her ability to work and must require and be able to benefit from VR services that would lead to permanent, competitive employment.

Once found eligible, the client's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is formulated to determine VR service needs. This is done through coordinated services and professional services. This process is driven by the client, who normally chooses to develop the plan with the assistance of the counselor and other VR team members.

Under the counselor's guidance, the coordinated services are arranged with the assistance of planned services support personnel and can include assessment, physical /mental restoration, training, personal assistance, transportation, maintenance, rehabilitation technology, assistive technology devices or services, or other goods and services. These services may be provided internally by team members or externally by vendors or other providers.

Professional services are carried out by the counselor, job coach, client service team, and CPE team members. These include counseling and guidance, job search, and job placement.

CPE classes are offered to all clients as they prepare for employment. These include

- Disability-related classes that address specific disabilities and how they affect the client's ability to work;

- Pre-employment classes in filling out job applications, developing interview skills, and basic computer skills; and/or
- Employment classes for job-ready clients, including job-seeking groups, advanced interview skills and other topics.

Job-readiness training helps the client develop positive work behaviors and the physical stamina needed for successful adjustment to a new job. This training may include performing work outsourced to the SCVRD work training center by area businesses and industries.

As the client approaches the completion of the services on the IPE, the counselor and other team members focus on the job placement process. Many clients can and do find their own jobs. However, other clients require varying degrees of job placement assistance. The department places a strong emphasis on direct placement. The professional staff focuses on client and community interaction, while the support staff focuses on case management activities.

Once a client is placed into employment, there is regular monitoring of his or her progress. In some cases the department's job coach works side by side with the client to provide training in job duties. This training is provided without charge to the employer, who pays only the new employee.

When a client has worked successfully on a job for at least 90 days and the employer and client are satisfied, the case is closed. The client signs off on the closure and is given the opportunity for feedback on the services received.

Quality assurances are demanding, not only by the department's choice but by law. Client signatures are required at each major stage of the process, but that is only the beginning. The system for compliance assurance is the responsibility of the area supervisor or statewide program supervisor with oversight from their State Office supervisors. This system has many components, each of which can be done as a separate entity or in cross-referenced, topical form.

Caseload reviews are conducted by the area supervisor, area case review coordinator and an office assistant. Findings are reviewed with the counselor and case service team in question to solicit feedback and clarifications. The frequency of caseload reviews is based on the experience of the counselor, but is at least once a year. At least 15 percent of the cases in a caseload are reviewed. The presence of required documentation is checked, the frequency of case monitoring, the timely provision of services and referrals based on the IPE, and progress toward closure are among the subjects reviewed.

Topical reviews are focused on specific matters, such as planned service documentation, medication expenditures, and economic need analysis accuracy. Unlike caseload and financial reviews, which concentrate on a specific caseload, topical reviews are conducted across a selection of caseloads. Topical reviews can yield teaching points which can, in turn, enhance the prospects for positive caseload and financial reviews.

Financial reviews check authorizations; bills and revolving fund issues; accuracy of economic need analysis; efforts made to find comparable services and benefits elsewhere (especially in high-expenditure cases); whether purchased medications are appropriate and within acceptable cost structures; expenditures on post-secondary training; and the client's grades/progress toward completion of study.

Area program reviews are conducted semi-annually by the program evaluation team headquartered in the State Office. Through case review and direct client and employer contact, the evaluation team determines the degree of compliance and customer-determined quality service delivery. Once areas for improvement are noted, a follow-up review is conducted within six months to determine whether sufficient corrections have been made. An innovative feature of this process is the enabling of local staff to select cases for the follow-up review, which can best show their level of understanding of compliance and quality aspects of case services.

Management plans are required from each of the area offices and include local plans for topics such as customer service, compliance, public information and education, staff reward and recognition, operational procedures, and job placement. Regional supervisors review these management plans, and the department has developed a management plan review instrument based specifically on the Program Integrity model.

The Integrated Service Delivery System has created a teamwork environment. It levels the playing field for all staff, giving each staff member an investment in the client. Most importantly it has put the client in the center of the process.

The Disability Determination Division uses extensive quality assurance and operational analysis systems to maintain an ongoing assessment of work processes. First-line supervisors maintain regular in-line and end-of-line reviews utilizing both computer analysis and actual case review. Regular random samples are selected from case clearances for review by centralized quality assurance staff. Comprehensive end-of-line audits are conducted by fiscal staff in the administrative services unit to ensure a high level of accuracy in all payment activities. Ongoing operational analyses are conducted by program analysts to provide continuous assessment of efficiency and effectiveness of case processing policies and procedures. All procedural requirements are available to division staff through an extensive array of physical and electronic references.

Support Processes

Critical agency work processes are outlined in detail through role definitions and charts showing the flow of the rehabilitation process. Employees understand their roles in the process through formal training and team building on the job. While local case service teams engage in the support processes, other local and state personnel use specialized processes also aimed at achieving the agency mission. Personnel such as area supervisors, procurement specialists, office assistants and information specialists provide administrative support in SCVRD area offices.

Technology support plays an extremely vital role. As mentioned earlier, technology advancements contributed significantly to improved customer service. The automation of many casework functions enabled rehabilitation team members to spend more quality time helping clients achieve their goals and less time on process. Caseload management reports are available on the network from appropriate workstations. It is no longer necessary to wait for the Information Systems department to generate and deliver reports because the reports are immediately available for viewing or printing. The department continues to add functions to the workstations to make case documentation easier, faster, and more accessible. The department's Case Service Policy went online this year, making access and revisions much more time-efficient. Information Systems also provides technology to track the State Office's administrative data, equips offices with computer systems, maintains those systems, and responds to new needs agencywide.

This year the Information Systems department completed statewide implementation of e-mail and Internet capability for approved users.

Communication support also includes voice mail in selected areas. The agency has sought a balance between the advantages of recorded voice mail and our customers' need for direct "live" contact. The option to speak with someone is always available even on voice mail connections.

During fiscal year 2000-2001, the Information Systems team responded to 3,599 Help Desk calls, 295 work requests for networking, systems development and IT support, and 357 telephone service requests.

The State Office houses many other support operations for the SCVRD program, and each one is tied into accomplishing the agency mission.

Case Services and Program Service Development provides support in the implementation of the client service process. An assistant commissioner heads this department. Each region is assigned a client services consultant to assist with problems and as well as the training of new counselors, CPE specialists and support staff. This department constantly gets feedback from its customers to consider in developing new approaches to effective client service delivery. This department is also charged with interpreting and developing new policy based on federal regulations as well as communicating policy to the field.

Statewide Facilities and Programs focus on effective working relationships with partner agencies and organizations. The support of this department is vital as the program strives to eliminate duplication of services, looks to share costs, identifies eligible people in institutions, connects clients with area offices, and increases employment outcome possibilities.

Regional Services oversees the operations of the 20 area offices and 22 work training centers throughout the state, dividing them into three regions. Regional supervisors monitor caseload reports, management plans, and general operations for Program Integrity compliance. They coordinate the exchange of information that often helps different area operations learn from each other. The agency periodically rotates the geographical areas that fall under each regional supervisor to promote innovation and fresh approaches to local service delivery and outcomes.

The Finance department handles all billing matters, following state financial guidelines and accounting measures. Timely handling of transactions keeps the vocational rehabilitation process flowing for internal customers and the external customers they serve.

Budget specialists track the use of the agency's dollars and ensure compliance with state and federal standards as well as agency priorities. The agency receives funding from state and federal governments and adheres to very strict accountability measures to ensure wise distribution of resources.

The Procurement division coordinates all administrative purchases made by the agency. Each authorization for purchased goods and services passes through this office for approval within agency, state and federal guidelines. The office ensures compliance. Each office has building and grounds personnel that have the task of providing an attractive, safe and pleasant work environment for our clients as well as staff. This is especially important since the West Columbia campus has residential facilities and is home to clients while they are involved in assessment or training. This is also true of the substance abuse treatment centers. An assistant commissioner supervises the finance, budget, procurement and other administrative aspects of the State Office.

Human Resources staff support all offices in the testing, hiring and maintaining of agency personnel, coordination of performance review measures, payroll, employee relations, reward and recognition, benefits, annual and sick leave, and other initiatives.

Public Information provides statewide support through marketing materials (print, video and displays), internal public information project development, media contact, printing/copying of forms and internal documents, and other general public information duties.

The Risk Management division, newly created by the commissioner, seeks to eliminate and minimize hazards in the work environment for clients and employees and reduce costs in the process. It enhances clients' preparation for competitive employment by emphasizing safety first.

The Program Evaluation staff, under the supervision of an assistant commissioner, systematically travels the state to each area office to ensure that 100 percent compliance is achieved. An extensive program audit is conducted where cases are reviewed from each caseload. Recommendations are made and follow-up visits ensure compliance is strictly met. SCVRD has an outstanding record of meeting compliance requirements by our governing body, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

The Client Relations Specialist is available for clients to contact when they are not satisfied with the way their service programs have been carried out. He works closely with staff of the Client Assistance Program in the Office of the Governor.

The Staff Attorney coordinates resolution of legal issues facing the department and is a key participant in the agency's adherence to compliance guidelines.

The Director of Facility Management coordinates arrangements on construction, renovation and other structural concerns of agency facilities.

The Work Training Center Support mechanism ties together the agency's efforts on bringing in quality outsource agreements with businesses and industries around the state. More than 350 businesses and industries provide outsource work to our 22 work training centers, generating valuable work experience for clients at those centers and paving the way for job readiness. The needs of the individual client determine the length of stay in the center. Interaction with trained production staff who are charged with providing continual feedback ensures each client is prepared to meet the demands of employment.

In addition, SCVRD has two residential substance abuse treatment centers—Holmesview Center in Greenville and Palmetto Center in Florence. The treatment staff is dedicated to helping individuals regain their lives and resume competitive employment by helping them deal with the emotional, physical, and medical aspects of confronting an addiction and replacing it with a sober, rewarding lifestyle. Last fiscal year, the two centers provided addictions treatment to 1,073 clients referred from all over the state (an increase of 98 clients from the previous year).

The Center for Comprehensive Programs, located on the SCVRD main campus in West Columbia, has six components designed to meet the requirements of clients with significant physical disabilities. These programs include: Evaluation Center, Pain Management, Muscular Development Program, Computer Training Program, Rehabilitation Technology Program, and a Barrier-Free Model Home. The center accepts clients from all over the state.

Supplier and Partnering Process

The agency has very strict standards for suppliers, who must adhere to firmly established fee schedules for all purchased products and services in the client service program. Members of SCVRD teams constantly “shop around” for the best resources in purchased services. When referring clients for needed medical services, the department insists that all physicians are approved for Medicare reimbursement. When sponsoring a client’s post secondary education, training, the department insists on certification of the institution. Qualifications of vendors are checked in the best interest of clients. For example, some vendors who perform van conversions to make vans accessible for people with disabilities are not considered qualified. SCVRD uses only nationally accredited providers with high levels of training.

The department complies with all state and federal procurement codes, requires competitive bidding in line with those regulations, and utilizes the advantages of the state contract system for purchases when possible. Suppliers who work with SCVRD are subject to regular and intensive state and federal audits.

A key component of the partnering process involves SCVRD Work Training Center partnerships with more than 350 businesses and industries statewide, nationally, and internationally. These companies provide outsource work to the centers, where clients get real work experience and get paid for production. This is successful because it is mutually advantageous. Employers become involved with the training centers not simply because of a sense of compassion, but because they can get quality work done at a good price. However, this is not considered permanent employment. It is strictly a training opportunity that helps clients build the skills and work behaviors they need to be successfully employed. This program ties in to the Career Planning and Employment process; so training center staff is involved both in direct client services and contact with business partners. Recruitment of businesses to participate in the program is essential, and center managers, area supervisors and other SCVRD staff constantly work on maintaining these partnerships through marketing efforts and community involvement. Partners often refer other businesses to our centers. This relationship may have many facets, outsourcing, employment for our clients, and the opportunity to provide Job Retention Services (JRS) to the businesses’ employees. Printed marketing tools assist in the partnering process.

7. Business Results

Customer Focused Results

The primary objective of the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Basic Service Program is to use its limited resources in the most effective, efficient and customer-oriented manner to serve as many working-aged South Carolinians with disabilities as possible and place them in competitive employment. This objective will be measured by comparing the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department's results in those areas to those of vocational rehabilitation programs across the nation, as well as to its own benchmarks.

Key Results/Performance Indicators

The department's success is rooted in the consistently solid performance of its employees. Shifting from a process-based system to an outcome-oriented, team-based operation has broadened employee ownership and increased accountability from the bottom to the top of the agency.

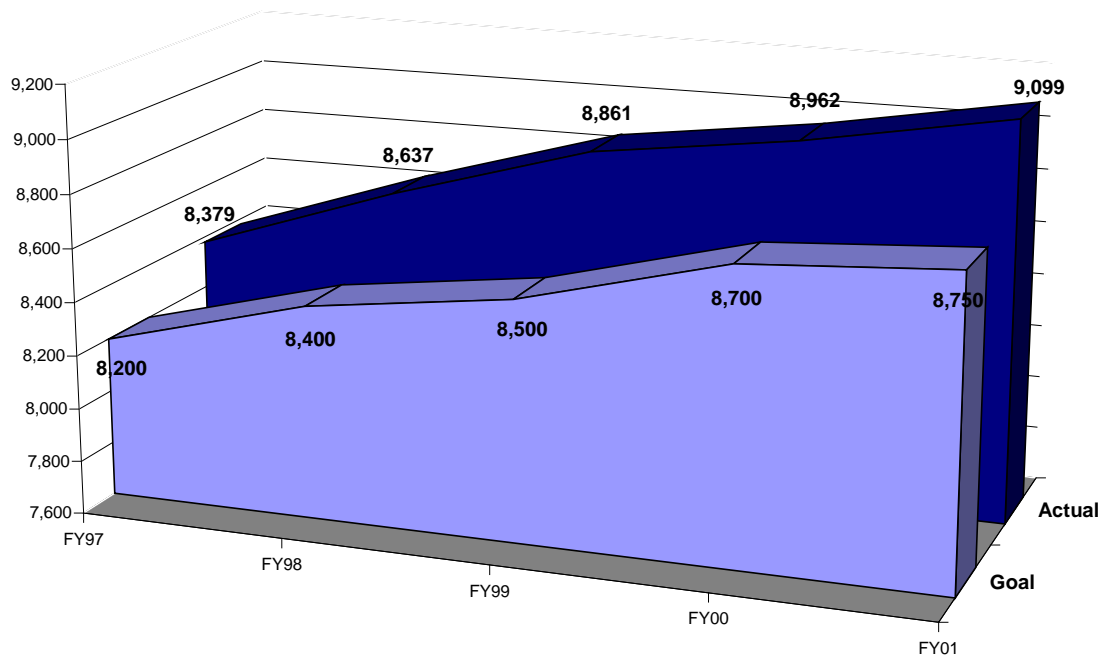
The department has surpassed national averages in several key categories for many years and therefore also uses its own previous fiscal year outcomes as benchmarks, measuring up as follows:

Clients served/rehabilitated	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-2001
Total accepted for services	16,141	16,742	17,007	16,533	17,048
Total active cases served	32,642	34,187	35,609	36,607	37,805
Total number of rehabilitations	8,379	8,637	8,861	8,962	9,099

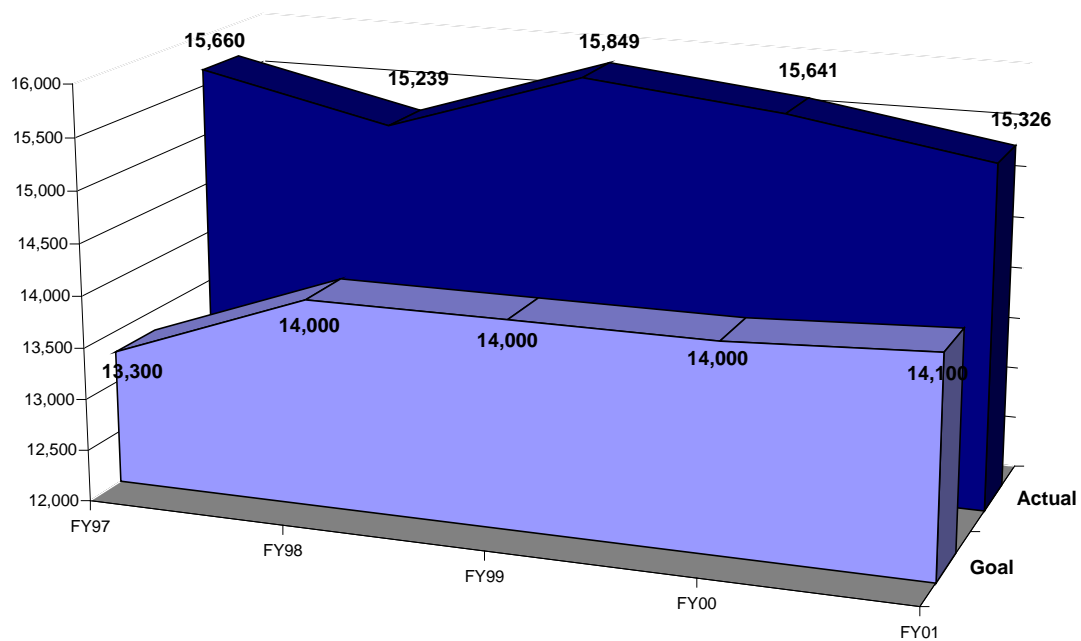
Goal attainment

The department continued to surpass its annual goals for writing Individualized Plans for Employment for clients and for successful closures (clients rehabilitated into employment):

Successful Closures



Individualized Plans for Employment



The number of applicants whose cases were closed in “Status 08” (without being accepted for services) has shrunk from 7,338 in 1993-94 to 4,089 in 2000-2001. This can be attributed to the emphasis on using existing records to determine eligibility. This practice has dramatically reduced the time it takes to determine eligibility, so fewer applicants drop out of the process while waiting for eligibility rulings.

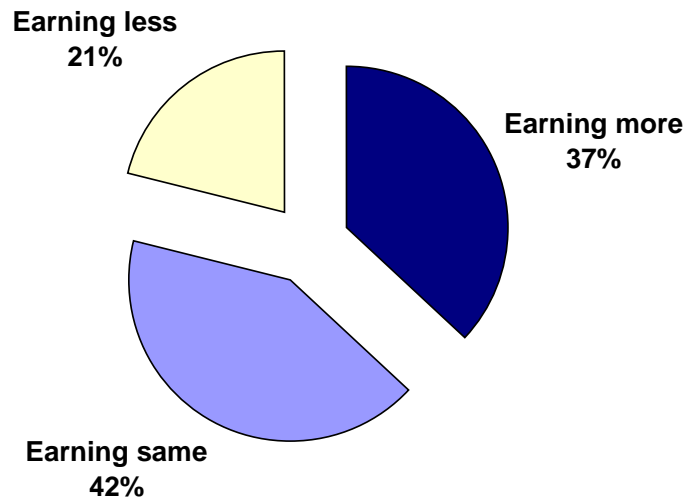
Statewide Facilities personnel opened 1,274 cases at partnering organizations in 2000-2001. They closed 288 cases and had a rehabilitation rate of 58 percent. The rehabilitation rate is determined by dividing the number of successful closures by the total number of closures. Since Statewide Facilities personnel refer cases back to local SCVRD offices, the rehabilitation rate is a key performance measure. Their rehabilitation rate is slightly lower than the overall agency level, but is a reflection of the difficult nature of some of the client population served in statewide facilities.

Customer Satisfaction

Follow-up surveys of successfully rehabilitated clients show a highly favorable assessment of SCVRD services. The department surveys a random sample of clients one year after their cases closed.

	FY 1997	FY 1998	FY 1999	FY 2000
Employed one year after closure	76%	78%	77%	75%
Counselor willingness to listen to client’s ideas and suggestions in developing service plan	99%	98%	98%	97%
Satisfied with adequacy of information about their disabilities	99%	98%	97%	97%
Satisfied with promptness of service delivery	99%	98%	97%	97%
Satisfied with kind of training received	93%	93%	93%	93%
Satisfied with benefits of training received	92%	96%	97%	94%
Satisfied with assistance in seeking job and finding employment	92%	93%	95%	93%
Satisfied with results of physical restoration services	96%	95%	96%	96%
Would recommend SCVRD to others	99%	98%	99%	99%

Salary comparison one year after closure



Financial and Market Results

Return on the Taxpayer Investment

The department's clients continue to show a very high rate of return on the taxpayer's investment. Successfully rehabilitated clients become contributors to our state's economy rather than relying on benefits funded by taxes.

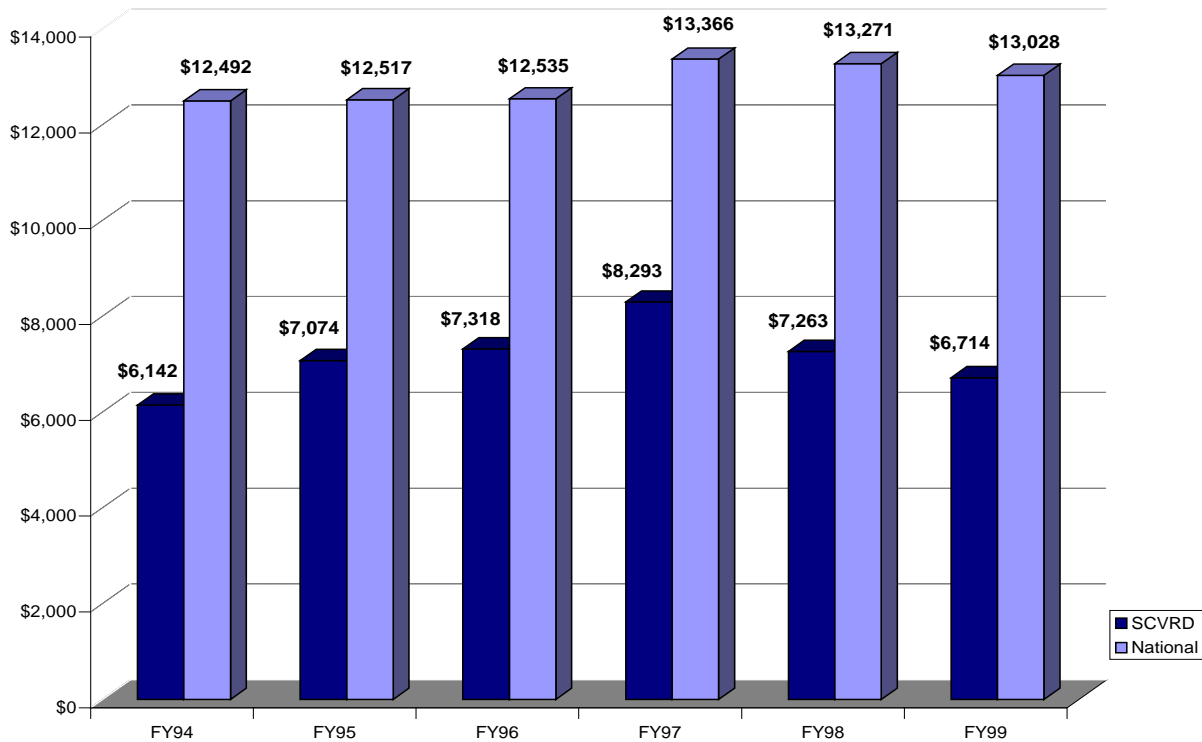
For instance, clients who become employed realize an increase in their earnings by **\$12.41** for every \$1 of Vocational Rehabilitation Department funds invested in their rehabilitation.

They return an estimated **\$2.63** in taxes for every dollar spent on their vocational rehabilitation.

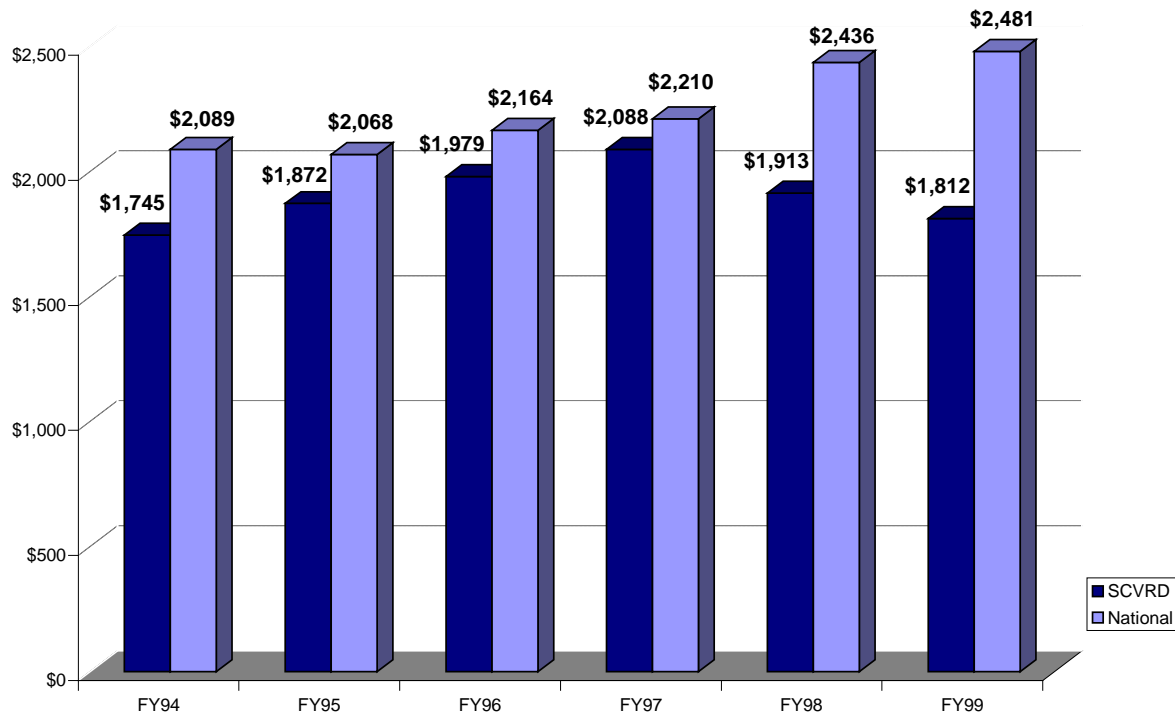
They repay the cost of their vocational rehabilitation in an average of only **5.3** years.

The charts on the following page show that SCVRD's cost-effectiveness in serving and rehabilitating clients far surpasses the national average. The department ranks first in the nation in both of these categories.

Average total cost per rehabilitation



Average total cost per client served



Though the SCVRD cost per client served is slightly less than the national average, the cost per rehabilitation is substantially less because of SCVRD's productivity.

Wages

South Carolina as a whole does not rank high nationally in per capita income, but the Vocational Rehabilitation Department's successfully rehabilitated clients historically surpass their counterparts nationally in average weekly wages. The most recent national figures available (1997) indicated a \$256 average weekly wage, \$19 less than for SCVRD clients, whose wages have shown the following ranges:

	FY 1997	FY 1998	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001
Average weekly wage at intake	\$88	\$96	\$97	\$107	\$124
Average weekly wage at closure	\$275	\$282	\$282	\$311	\$328

Wage at intake reflects all sources of income, including government benefits, family, friends and employment. The weekly wage at closure increased even though the percentage of clients classified as "significantly" disabled rose from 67 percent to 86 percent during this span. The overall client acceptance rate also increased from 73 percent to 81 percent the last four years.

Human Resource Results

Cost reductions are evident in many areas because of increased automation and overall staff productivity. Personnel allocations are now related to per-employee productivity. Total case service dollars spent in the basic service program have remained stable, while the total number of clients served has increased from 20,073 to 20,759. However, the department will not be able to sustain this trend in FY 2002 due to state funding reductions, as reflected in the Executive Summary.

The State Human Affairs Commission annually publishes its report on state agency hiring. This report details each agency's efforts in recruiting, hiring and promoting individuals in various sex and race demographic categories and ranks agencies on how closely the makeup of the agency reflects the available workforce. In the last four years, SCVRD has increased its level of goal attainment 10 percentage points, from 83 percent to 93 percent. In addition, the agency now ranks eleventh among all state agencies in goal attainment and third among large agencies of 501 employees or more.

In addition to the state's cost-of-living increases for all employees, merit increases have been awarded to employees in recent years. In fiscal year 2000-2001, the General Assembly funded an average 1 percent merit increase. The agency provided an additional 1 percent salary increase to employees with a "meets performance requirements" rating and an additional 2 percent for employees with an "exceeds" or "substantially exceeds" rating. It was the second consecutive year that the department provided additional funding for merit increases.

One measure to determine how effective our initiatives have been in creating a positive and productive work environment is the turnover rate for department employees. A comparison of the aggregate turnover rate for 1998 to 1999 and 2000 calendar year statistics indicates decreases of 20 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

The Celebration of Success reward and recognition program has been well-received by staff. In fiscal year 2000-2001, a total of 224 prizes were awarded to employees who had garnered three nominations from their peers. Many other employees had received one or two nominations.

Human Resource Development and Training 2000-2001

<i>Training Site</i>	<i>Total Training Events</i>	<i>Total Training Participants</i>
State Office & videoconference sites	114	2,060
Other SCVRD sites	15	133
Other sites (non-SCVRD)	230	631
Totals	359	2,824*

** Some staff members participated in more than one training event.*

Business Partner Results

Partnerships with South Carolina's businesses and industries through outsource agreements provide outstanding training opportunities for clients, who also receive training wages for production. The agreements generate revenue for the department's 22 work training centers. Last year, 8,209 clients received services at the training centers and 2,385 became competitively employed after receiving these services. Remaining clients continued to receive services.

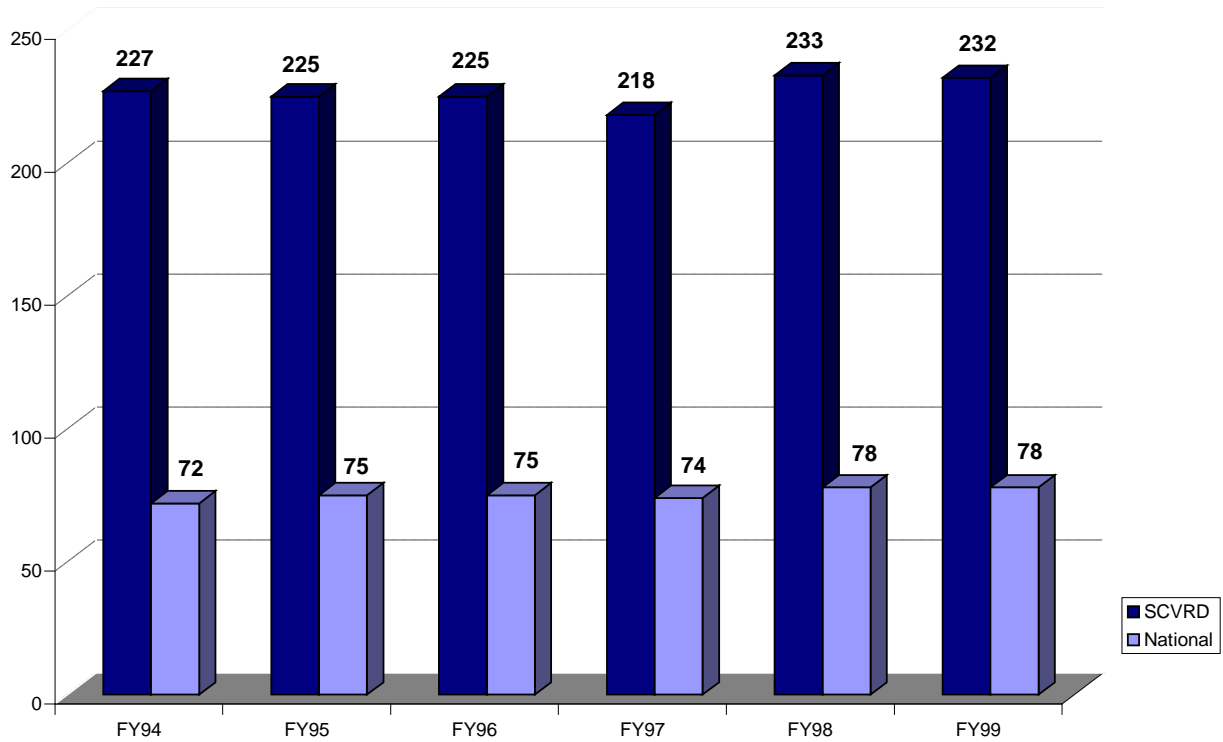
	FY 1998	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001
Revenues from outsource work for business & industry	\$16,334,137	\$15,585,829	\$16,327,474	\$15,712,875

Some of these revenues (\$6,075,331 in FY 2001) were used as wages for the clients who perform the outsource work as part of their job readiness training at the centers. The remainder was used for raw materials, supplies and other operating costs.

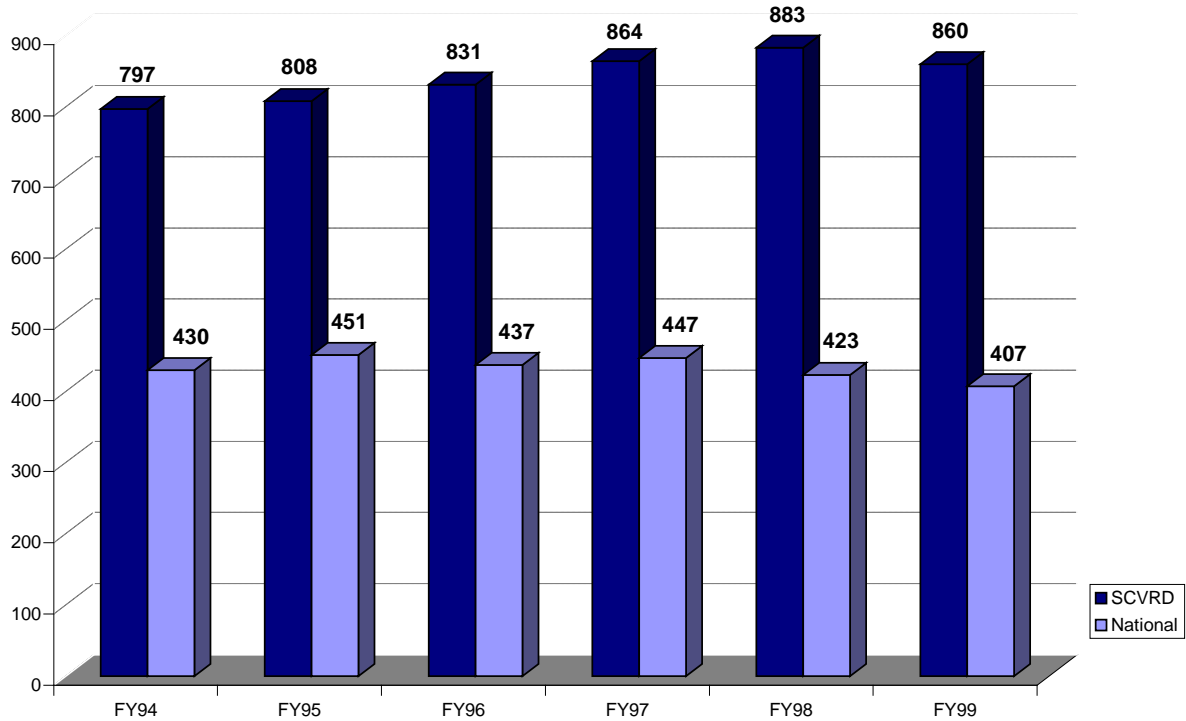
Organizational Effectiveness Results

The following performance measures illustrate SCVRD's success compared with national averages of public VR programs in every state as well as with the department's own benchmarks. The most recently available data on national rehabilitation rates and costs reflects fiscal year 1999.

Rehabilitations per 100,000 population



Clients served per 100,000 population



The department is number one in the nation in both of the categories shown on the previous page. SCVRD also compares very favorably nationally in the following categories:

Performance Measure	National Avg.	SCVRD
Change in number of employment outcomes	+ 142	+ 386
Percentage of outcomes with employment	62.7 %	64.1%
Percentage of employed who are “competitively employed”	82.1 %	86.3%
Percentage of competitively employed who are “significantly” disabled	81.3%	85.7%

Disability Determination Division

The Disability Determination Division strives to achieve performance levels that are equal to or greater than the national average in the areas of productivity (number of claims produced for each FTE); cost per case; and medical cost per case. The goal for claim processing time is 100 days or less and the target for documentation accuracy is more than 90 percent. It must be noted that during the fiscal year 2001-2002 period, the Disability Determination Division will continue preparations to implement new case processing procedures as one of states selected to begin the new process in what is referred to as “Phase I Implementation.” The new procedures will add substantially to the amount of documentation obtained for each claim and to the amount of analysis required prior to adjudication. As a result, productivity levels will decline in comparison to the national average (since only ten states will begin using the new procedures at the same time) and both processing time and cost-per-case will rise. Consequently, while the division will continue to strive for performance at or above the national and regional averages, only comparison to those states participating in the Phase I implementation project will give an accurate assessment. Since full implementation has not yet occurred, national and regional data will be used for purposes of the present report.

<i>Effectiveness and Efficiency Measures</i>	<i>South Carolina 2000 – 2001</i>	<i>Atlanta Region 2000 – 2001</i>	<i>National Avg. 2000 – 2001</i>
Cost per case	\$338.00	\$324.00	\$381.00
Medical cost per case	\$ 90.40	\$ 97.49	\$108.21
Production per work year	285.1	278.2	263.9
Processing time	91.3	90.9	89.1
Documentation accuracy	93.6	92.5	93.6

During fiscal year 2001-2002 the Disability Determination Division will receive, develop and adjudicate more than 91,515 claims on more than 74,403 individual applicants for Social Security or SSI benefits. (Some individuals will apply for both programs at the same time.) In addition, approximately 8,200 Medicaid claims, 2,000 claims for disability benefits under the South Carolina Retirement System and approximately 100 applications under the disability provisions of the Homestead Exemption Act will be processed. This will result in more than 1,950 determinations per week with decisions reached in an average of 100 days or less.